

Friday I'm In Love

*The Losers Of '89 Were
Here - III*

deadlydecember1214

Friday I'm In Love by deadlydecember1214

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Summary:

Richie and Eddie have a pretty shit week (Reddie songfic to “Friday, I’m in Love” by The Cure) (Aged-up to high school)

Friday I'm In Love

Author's Note:

I dunno... I just love this song and this just kind of happened but I'm a little in love with it???

Song: Friday I'm In Love by The Cure (1992)

I don't care if Monday's blue

Richie had always hated Mondays. They only meant another week of school he'd have to find some way to survive through. A Junior in high school at the age of 17, he was desperate to get through his last couple of years of required education and do... well, something more interesting than Algebra II, that was for fucking sure.

Waking up that Monday, the fall of 1992, Richie clambered out of bed in a bit of a blur. Searching for his glasses, he finally found them and shoved them onto his face, tripping around his bedroom. He'd hit snooze on the alarm clock one too many times again and was running a tad late.

In his hurry and because he still hadn't fully grown in his gangly limbs, Richie tripped over one of his bright red Chuck Taylor and groaned from the floor.

"Dammit, Richard! Keep it down! I'm trying to sleep!" He heard his mother scream from down the hallway.

Rolling his eyes, he sat up and rubbed the place where his shoulder had collided with his dresser on the way down. Unable to keep his notorious mouth shut, he called back, "Sorry, Mother Dearest! Silly me, I fell and almost killed myself! Inconsiderate, I know!"

There was a pause and then his father's voice, "Richard, stop being an idiot and get ready for school!"

Nodding to himself and running a hand down his face, Richie forced himself to his feet, muttering, "Yeah, stop being an idiot, Richard."

He made his way quickly to the dresser he'd nearly killed himself on a second ago and scrambled to find some articles of clean clothing. He really should do more laundry... Fuck all knows, Maggie Tozier couldn't be bothered with making sure her kid had anything decent to wear.

Richie pulled on a white t-shirt featuring The Cure and some black ripped jeans, tugging on his old, favorite matching hoodie, zipping up the hole-ridden thing. He smiled a little, just imagine what his best friend would say when he saw him adorning the same hoodie once again.

A disaster, That's what Eds had called it last time he'd seen it on Richie. You're wearing a fucking disaster, Richie.

A grin still on his lips, Richie quickly made his way downstairs only to meet his father in the kitchen where he'd intended to quickly make some toast for the road. He tried to spin on his heel to avoid the man but was immediately called back.

Sighing, he turned around, "What can I do for you, Daddy-o?"

"Don't be a smartass," Wentworth barked, making Richie flinch involuntarily and immediately flush in embarrassment for doing so. "I need you to actually be home tonight. Be responsible for once, you know? Your mother's sick—"

Richie snorted and was smacked hard in the ear by his glaring father.

"Sorry." The boy mumbled half-heartedly.

Wentworth continued, "Your mother's sick and someone needs to look after her."

Yeah, someone needs to...just not you, right, Dad?

Richie forced his eyes to stay on his father and not roll back in his head. His ear still stung from being hit a second ago, he wasn't jonesing for a repeat.

"So, you get your dumbass back here the second that goddamn bell rings. You understand, Richie?"

Richie nodded, a beat later feeling his father's hand collide with the side of his face once again.

"I said, you understand, dumbass?"

Gritting his teeth, Richie growled out, "I *understand*."

Yeah, Richie *hated* Mondays.

Tuesday's grey and Wednesday too

Eddie sighed and looked worriedly at his wristwatch before glancing at the classroom door once again. It was halfway through the third period on Tuesday and the seat beside him was *still* empty.

After his best friend had canceled his plans to meet the rest of the Losers at the Aladdin movie theater and then traded his shift at the arcade with one of his co-workers, Eddie had been left understandably confused. Richie was a sucker for classic movies and he *loved* his job, which was pretty shocking coming from the boy who hated basically any kind of physical labor.

Well, he had started off confused, now he was just plain worried.

Richie hated school, everyone knew that, but he didn't actually skip too often. It always got back to his parents and Eddie knew Richie's father wasn't too forgiving about such offenses. So, no way Richie was skipping. And he'd seemed fine just the day before... Eddie practically had a built-in radar for knowing when someone was getting sick and Richie hadn't been. He wasn't missing because of illness.

Eddie was running out of ideas as to why on earth Richie wasn't sitting next to him in boring ass Chemistry, cracking stupid jokes about how they must be electrons and protons because they were so attracted to each other. Eddie always rolled his eyes at those stupid jokes, never admitting how they really made his heart race, but now he was found himself longing to just hear the Trashmouth's infuriating voice.

Who was he even kidding? Richie's voice wasn't infuriating... It was probably one of Eddie's favorite sounds in the whole world. And he

missed it. He missed Richie.

Sighing again, Eddie glanced at the classroom door once more before returning to his notes.

After school Wednesday, when Richie had missed school once again, Eddie drove slowly, almost hesitantly, to the Tozier household. He pulled up to the curb and drummed his fingers against his squeaky-clean steering wheel and looked at the house with apprehension.

Eddie hated going to the Tozier's.

He hated how sweet, kind, and normal Maggie and Wentworth always acted while he was around, when he'd *seen* for himself all the damage the couple could do. He'd seen the frequent bruises, the occasional tears, and the more common than anything else fists slamming against walls and doors.

How dare they look Eddie in eye and pretend they were decent, even good, parents? How dare they when Eddie was the one Richie most often turned to whenever his parents told him to 'fuck off for a bit'?

Biting his lip, Eddie forced himself out of the car and approached the faded blue front door, paint crumbling away from years of being overlooked. Raising his fist and internally scolding himself for his throat attempting to close, Eddie knocked on the door.

You don't need your inhaler. You fucking know you don't need your inhaler. You haven't for years. Stop being a fucking baby, Kaspbrak. He chanted over and over in his head as he looked down at his white Keds and waited.

Shifting from foot to foot, he glanced around, noted the cars parked in the driveway and knocked again.

After a beat, the door was thrown open and revealed a rough looking Maggie Tozier. Richie looked shockingly unlike her; where she was straight blonde, her son was messy and jet black, as her eyes reflected dull, pale blue irises, her son's were warm and brown and Eddie's favorite color probably ever.

Most of all, though, she looked hungover.

She leaned against the frame of the front door and squinted into the bright light of the late afternoon, taking a moment to focus on Eddie's face. "Ed- Eddie! Right?"

"Uh, yeah," Eddie muttered, eyebrows drawing together. She had known the boy since he was 5... Twelve fucking years ago. The alcohol must have still been screwing with her head. "I was just wondering if Richie was home? I was, um, just worried since I haven't seen him at school."

"Richie?" Maggie echoed, her expression blank for a second before she blinked and smiled, "Richard! Richie! My little boy..."

Your what? Eddie wanted to bark, clenching his fist.

He didn't think a mother got to call her son that anymore once she'd also told him straight to his face that she wished he'd never been born and that she'd had a daughter instead.

Maggie licked her lips and glanced back into the house before looking back at Eddie, "He can't play right now."

"We're 17," Eddie noted before he could stop himself, eyebrows knitting together, "We don't really 'play' together anymore, but that's not the point. I just need — I wanted to see him..." He trailed off, cheeks flushing as he heard how his own words sounded

Too clingy, too needy, too much more than friendly.

Maggie's eyes narrowed for a moment and Eddie was absolutely sure she had heard it too. He wanted to pull the words back in, rephrase himself, not risk his stupid slip-up causing more trouble for Richie.

When Richie's mother spoke next, her tone was cold, "He can't come to the door."

And then she slammed that pale blue door in Eddie's face, not giving him time to try and articulate himself again.

Eddie's stomach twisted painfully and he felt sick as his chest began to ache. It wasn't the ache of his panic attacks that he'd thought for so long were asthma; no, it was something else entirely. An ache like

a wound, like a punch to his lungs.

No, not his lungs... maybe to his heart? An ache like someone had gripped it and was squeezing too tightly.

Numbly, with the world around him appearing only in varying shades of grey, Eddie Kaspbrak walked back to his car and begrudgingly drove away, feeling a little like he was leaving a part of himself behind in the Tozier household.

Thursday I don't care about you

Richie slammed his locker shut so hard on Thursday morning, several heads in the hallway whirled around to give him perplexed looks. His knuckles turned white as he clutched his economics textbook in one hand and balled a fist in his hoodie pocket in the other. Yup, back in the disaster of a hoodie and he couldn't give a fuck.

Hearing familiar footfalls approaching him hurriedly from behind, Richie squeezed his eyes shut and prayed to a God he didn't believe in that *Eddie and his spotless Keds* would just go away.

Richie couldn't do it today. Not that Thursday.

He wasn't so lucky, though, as a small hand grabbed at his arm. He could feel the familiar cold fingers of poor circulation through the holes in the sleeves of the black hoodie, his gray Queen t-shirt doing him no favors to prevent the physical contact.

Richie considered jerking his arm away and walking on, but this was *Eddie*, he just couldn't bring himself to do it.

So, instead, he stopped, waiting for the smaller boy to round on him.

“What the hell, Richie? Where have you—“ Eddie stopped dead, taking in Richie's appearance in full. He paled and Richie bit down hard on his lip, sighing as he looked off to the side. “Wh-what happened to you?”

Eddie, without thinking, reached up and traced his fingers gently over the bruised skin under Richie's right eye, down to the split lip on the opposite side. Even though the other boy barely touched him,

Richie still cringed away and took a step back while forcing a lazy, bored smile.

“Nothing, Eds. Don’t have a fucking panic attack.” It was a low blow and Richie knew it but he really hadn’t wanted to deal with Eddie in the first place so...

“Nothing?” Eddie barked, incredulously, for once ignoring the nickname that had rolled off Richie’s tongue without a second thought.

Richie shrugged and nodded, only pissing his best friend off more.

“You missing school for days, being unable to even come to the door to talk to me yesterday, and now showing up with a black eye and split lip?! And that’s just *nothing*?!?”

Richie scowled at the linoleum floor before leveling his gaze with Eddie’s, eyes still cold. “Yeah, I fucking guess so.”

“You *guess so*!?” Eddie howled, turning more heads in the hallway. Richie looked around and shuffled in place for a moment, for once being the one to wish for silence. “Richie, tell me what happened? Was it—“ He cut himself off but his look said it all.

Was it your Dad?

Richie groaned, looking toward the ceiling in exasperation. He just wanted the conversation to be over. He didn’t want to fucking talk about it. He never wanted to talk about it and Eddie was always pushing, picking, asking for more than Richie ever wanted to give.

And maybe any other day, any other Thursday, Richie would have given his best friend what he wanted. But not that fucking Thursday.

Harshly, Richie pushed past the smaller boy, knocking him a bit to the side. “Stop being a fucking drama queen, Eddie. I have class.”

The Trashmouth could feel Eddie’s eyes on him all the way until he rounded to corner but he didn’t look back. He didn’t have to know what he’d see; Eddie looking confused, angry, and hurt. He didn’t want to see that... and not that he really cared, but he did have class.

Richie told himself that he cared even less about Eddie's nagging and micromanaging and nitpicking. In fact, he even didn't care about Eddie Kaspbrak's opinion. If he did and he did so too much, he knew it would just end in him getting smacked around some more.

He could still hear his mother's disgusted tone from last night, could hear the echo of his father's taunts as the man laid into him once again, even more aggressive and angry than ever before.

It started as soon as his Mom had closed to door in Eddie's face...

Maggie turned on her heel, glaring when she found her son watching the interaction from the kitchen doorway. She narrowed her eyes at him.

Raising her voice in a squeaky attempt to mock Eddie, she said, "I just need to see him!," She dropped back into her usual harsh tone, "You know your little friend's a fairy, right?"

Richie did actually. Eddie'd been out to the Losers' since they were Freshman, still, he didn't appreciate his mother's cruel moniker for his best friend. His jaw clenched and he rolled his eyes, "So what if he is?"

"So what?" Maggie shook her head, crossing the hallway until she was right in Richie's personal space with a look of utter revulsion. "So what, Richard? So, you shouldn't be keeping company with the likes of him. You might catch it."

"Catch it?" Richie echoed, looking at his mother like she'd grown a second head. "You can't fucking catch queer, Mom. If Eddie is then he was fucking born that way. It's not a damn disease, just how some people are."

"You sayin' it's how you are?" His mother hissed, glaring at him suspiciously.

Richie shifted under her gaze and knew full well that was the wrong thing to do. He wasn't gay, he knew he wasn't. He just happened to like boys about as much as he liked girls... Bisexual was what Bev had told him was the new, modern term for it.

But Maggie Tozier would never understand that. She wouldn't even try because she didn't care enough about him to see things from his side. She never had.

Richie knew he had to say something, heart pounding his ears and clenched fists sweating, “No.”

“You sure? Because you seem awfully protective of your little fairy friend.” Maggie asked, eyes still narrowed.

“Because he’s my fucking best friend, Mom. You know that.” He shrugged, trying to seem nonchalant. “I’ve known him since I was still eating sand on the playground.”

Maggie stared at him for a long time and even though Richie was now much taller than his mother, he still felt like a scolded child under her withering gaze. He wondered if he’d ever get over that or if it was some instinct in him he’d never be able to kick just because she was the one who’d popped him out into the world.

“Wentworth!”

Richie’s heart dropped and he silently squeezed his eyes shut, cursing his mother. After a moment, he heard heavy footsteps thundering down the steps. If his heart had been pounding before, it now felt like it might beat right out of his chest.

“Goddammit, Maggie, what!? I have a job to do, you know? One I need if you’re going to keep drink us out of house and home!”

Richie opened his eyes as his father stepped into the kitchen, looking between his son and wife with a red, livid face. Well, that was just great, Daddy Dearest was already in a sour mood.

Maggie crossed her arms over her chest and kept her scrutiny focused solely on her boy, “Sonia’s boy came by, asking for this dumbass. You know, Went, the fairy? He was practically falling over himself, saying he just needed to see Richard, like he was in love with him or something.”

She spat the last bit like it was poison on her tongue and Richie’s face burned.

Eddie wasn’t in love with anyone, let alone Richie Tozier. He was just a decent human being, a good guy, and a great friend. Something Maggie obviously couldn’t fucking comprehend.

Still, she rented on, her words growing more and more disgusting in Richie's ears with every syllable, "And you know what I think, Went? I think Richard here might be just as queer as that little sicko."

He hated her. Fuck the fact that she was his mother, that she'd given him life or fucking whatever. He hated her more than anything in the world in that moment.

Little sicko? Eddie wasn't sick. He was great. He was the best of humanity and he didn't deserve judgment from scum the likes of Maggie Tozier.

Before his trash mouth could even voice any of these thoughts, his father was inches from his face, breathing down at him like an angry bull. Richie was ashamed of how his gut still twisted in fear. He was so tired of being afraid in his own fucking house, of his own fucking father.

Wentworth grounded out three short words, "That true, Richard?"

Some spark of either courage or idiocy ignited to life in Richie's chest and without thinking, he shrugged and said, "Maybe it is."

His ear rang as his father's fist came up to clobber him there. Wentworth grabbed the collar of his son's t-shirt, pulling him roughly forward so that the boy nearly tripped over his awkwardly long legs.

Richie swallowed, staring his father back down.

"What the fuck did you just say?"

"I said," Richie answered slowly as if trying to explain something to a struggling toddler, "Maybe it is, as in maybe I am just as queer as Eddie." He emphasized the name, sending his mother a look over his father's shoulder.

She just glared back.

He looked back at his shaking father with a rebellious smirk on his lips, "Maybe I am gay."

In the next moment, a fist connected hard with his smirking lips and he tasted blood. It might have been a busted tooth or just a busted lip, no way of knowing in that instant. Richie barely managed to cover his mouth and

yelp in pain before his father hit him again, harder, in the eye.

He stumbled back, tripping over the legs of a kitchen table chair and falling back on to his ass. Looking up at his father with not but contempt, even as his eye swelled, he spat blood on to his mother's favorite tile flooring and grinned. Blood coated his teeth, making him look manic and a little crazy but he didn't care.

He was so fucking tired of being afraid. It felt good to not care for once.

It was short-lived, as all good things in life seemed to be. Except maybe Eddie Kaspbrak; he seemed pretty long term in the scheme of Richie's existence.

Wentworth stepped forward in a flash and kicked Richie hard in the side, enough force to knock all the air from the boy's lungs. Tears stung Richie's eyes as he coughed and instinctually tried to crawl back, but it was no use. His father's foot connected again and again and one more time with his ribcage before the man seemed to think he'd learned his lesson.

Leaving their son on the kitchen floor, Maggie and Wentworth went back to whoever the fuck they'd been doing previously as if nothing had happened. As if Maggie had hurtled insult after insult and Went hadn't nearly broken his own child's ribs.

Richie deserved it, after all, didn't he? For being sick, for being a freak, a fairy. For actually giving a damn about another boy; a wonderful, god-sent boy who was one of the few people that made Richie feel like he even mattered at all.

Yeah, he deserved a good smacking around for that.

He was so fucking done with getting smacked around.

It's Friday, I'm in love

Eddie was stubborn. It was a trait so firmly built into his personality that at this point in his life, he'd stopped trying to deny it. He was stubborn, he just was and nothing was going to change that.

Not even Richie goddamn Tozier being a complete asshole to him.

Honestly, Richie was kind of always an asshole, but this was different.

Normally, the Trashmouth took things too far almost accidentally because he simply didn't have a filter and when called out by his friends, he was as close to apologetic as he would ever be. He even actually said sorry out loud now and then these days, since they were a little older and just slightly more mature.

Normally, Richie didn't actively try to be an asshole, he just was. Insanely, it was almost endearing to Eddie, something he found himself actually liking Richie even more, not inspire of, but because of.

Though, if Eddie was being completely honest with himself, he knew full well that all of Richie's flaws and quirks were at the core of why he liked him so much to begin with. Maybe even more than liked him...

Definitely more than liked him.

Friday rolled around and Eddie was more relieved to reach the end of the week than ever before.

Which was ironic since he actually liked school... well, maybe not school but he did like to learn and be educated. It sometimes felt like the only thing he just simply excelled at. He sucked at sports, having no hand-eye coordination, he couldn't run worth a shit, still prone to panic attacks that showed up as fake asthma, but at least he could get top marks in all his classes, dammit.

But this week had been shit and he was definitely ready for it to be over.

Friday night, Eddie sat alone in his room while he tried to get a leg up on studying for his upcoming Pre-Calculus test in a week and a half. Africa by Toto played throughout the bedroom, probably too loud if his mother was asked but he didn't really care. The music helped him concentrate, pushed through the muddled mess that was his over-analytical brain to get to the root of things.

He was humming along absentmindedly, nodding his head to the beat, when a tiny *plink* pulled him out of his mathematic stupor. Looking up from his notes, Eddie glanced around for the source of the noise. Seeing nothing, he reluctantly returned to his work.

Thunk.

Again, that noise, only harsher and louder this time. Eddie stood up, now sure it was coming from his window. Eyebrows knitting together, he slowly crossed his room, waiting for—

Thud.

This time, Eddie saw the rock hit the glass pane and jumped a bit. Goddammit, what dumbass was throwing fucking boulders at his window? It was going to bust if anything heavier got thrown at it.

The second he asked himself that question, he already knew the answer.

Quickly, Eddie rushed over and slid the damn thing open, sticking his head out in the chilly twilight air. Just as he'd known there would be, a disaster of a boy stood near the foundation of his house right underneath his window.

"Hey Eds," Richie called up, a smile on his face that didn't quite reach his eyes. "Mind a little chit-chat?"

"Not like this, dipshit," Eddie called back. He saw Richie's shoulders slump and quickly added, "But if you get your ass up here, I wouldn't mind."

Richie looked back up, moving his neck so quickly Eddie couldn't help but think about how the idiot had probably just given himself whiplash. He was smiling again and this time it actually made Eddie's chest burn in that weirdly pleasant way that he both feared and craved.

As Richie began to climb up Sonia's old trellis that never had flowers on it anymore, Eddie moved back into his room and looked around. Everything was in its place, as always, and Madonna's Borderline had replaced the Toto. It would have to do since he didn't exactly have

time to change anything up.

He whirled around when he heard Richie clambering in through the window and bit down hard on his lip so as to not laugh when the other boy's oversized foot caught on the sill, sending him sprawling across Eddie's bedroom floor.

Giggling lightly, Eddie went to help pull Richie up only to let him fall back to the floor upon hearing his mother's voice calling from down the hall.

"Eddie Bear? What was that thud? Are you okay?"

The boys stared at each other, wide-eyed, as Eddie pressed a finger to his lips and prayed that for once Richie Tozier could keep his fucking trap closed. Calling back, Eddie knew he sounded a little obvious, "I'm fine, Mommy!"

He cringed as Richie slapped a hand over his own mouth to muffle his laughter. Eddie flipped him off before continuing, "D-dropped a textbook, that's all. Absolutely nothing else going on in here! I swear!"

Richie gave him a look that clearly said *And I'm the one who can't shut up?*

Eddie ignored him and waited for his mother's response.

"Okay, if you're sure. You know I'm just in my room if you need me." Sonia emphasized and Eddie pinched the bridge of his nose in annoyance.

"Yeah, Mom, I know!"

There was the shuffle of footsteps and the creaking of Sonia Kaspbrak's bedroom door before both boys let out sighs of relief.

Richie finally jumped up to his feet and reach out to pinch Eddie's cheek, "You're so damn cute when you try to lie, Eds."

"Don't call me that," He mumbled, before shoving Richie's hand away. Crossing his arms over his chest, he turned to his best friend as

the other boy took a seat on his pristine bed. Raising his eyebrows, he said, “So, you wanted to talk?”

“Chit-chat,” Richie corrected, pointing into nothingness. Eddie rolled his eyes at the completely unnecessary clarification before raising his eyebrows at his friend, gesturing for him to get on with it.

Richie sighed and patted at the thighs of his jeans. Eddie noted he was bouncing one of his legs like he always did when he had too much pent up energy in his veins... so pretty much all the time. Richie never stopped moving, it was just another one of his many quirks.

“I—I’m sor—“ Richie’s voice cracked a little and he cringed, clearing his throat, “I’m such an asshole, aren’t I, Eds?”

Eddie shrugged, leaning back against his bookcase and taking in all of Richie. “I’m pretty used to it.”

Richie nodded, beginning to pick the sleeves of that god awful dark hoodie he always fucking wore.

Eddie groaned and moved forward to swat at his hands, “Stop! That thing’s enough of a disaster without you picking at the holes and making everything worse.”

The music changed again, temporarily drawing both of the boy’s attention. Richie quirked an eyebrow, “The Cure? Thought you hated rock?”

Eddie shrugged, “Some of the shit you play isn’t the worse...”

“Just not quite Cyndi Lauper, though, right?”

“Shut up, Tozier.”

Silence fell between them and after a few minutes of just listening to Friday, I’m in Love, Eddie sighed in annoyance, “Well, are you gonna talk, Trashmouth or—“

“You literally just told me to shut up!”

“When have you ever done what I told you to do?! So, spit it out or go home. I don’t really either way care since you’ve been a grade A dick to me lately...”

Richie groaned, “Yeah, I know I have. I just—“

He stopped and Eddie waited again. After another few seconds passed in silence before the hypochondriac threw his hands up, “Yup, you need to go. This is so fucking dumb. Just go home—“

“I can’t, okay?” Richie snapped, taking Eddie by surprise. A second later he repeated himself, voice quieter, “I can’t.”

Everything easily clicked into place in Eddie’s brain. Of course, Richie couldn’t go home, he thought while looking at the lingering bruise under his friend’s warm brown eye. If he went home, a black eye would probably seem like light punishment.

“Okay,” Was all Eddie said, slowly making his way back across the room to sit beside Richie on the bed.

Swallowing, he moved close enough for their shoulders to brush. An unspoken reminder that he was right there whenever Richie was ready for... whatever he needed to be ready for.

Finally, after much more fiddling on Richie’s part and much more patience on Eddie’s, the former spoke up, “You’re pretty fucking smart, you know that, Eds?”

Eddie didn’t know exactly how to respond. Richie’s compliments always sounded like they were doubling as jokes but this time was different. There was a hesitance and uncertainty that even Eddie wasn’t familiar with from Richie Tozier.

Luckily Richie didn’t wait for the words he didn’t seem able to find, continuing on as he traced over his split lip, “You were right that it was him, my jackass of a father. He smacked me around a bit the other night.”

Eddie cringed and was thankful Richie wasn’t looking at him, as he knew how the boy hated anything that could be seen as pity. “Why would he do that?”

Richie looked off into the bedroom, looking over Eddie's color-coded math notes still out on his desk, the boy's up-of-date stereo set up that he wouldn't upgrade no matter how many times Richie told him to, all the polos and oversized t-shirt hung up the closet nook. Being surrounded by all the Eddie made Richie finally begin to relax, the bouncing of his knee slowing just a little.

The lanky teenage shrugged and rubbed the back of his neck, "Probably because I said that I might be gay?"

"You wh-what?!" Eddie exclaimed, jumping up and whirling on his friend, "But you're — you know — not!"

"Debatable," Richie countered, lazily.

"No, it's fucking not!" Eddie said, incredulously.

Richie raised his finger to point at Eddie, "I think I'm a little gay, Eds. I think everyone knows already that I'm a little gay. I mean, yeah, I like chicks but I'm definitely into dick too."

"That makes you bisexual, asshole. Not gay. I'm—" Eddie stopped, eyes flickering to his bedroom door as he lowered his voice, thoughts going to his mother just down the hall. "*I'm gay.*"

"I know you are," Richie said, eyebrows drawing together as he became suddenly thoughtful. "And there's nothing wrong with that, Eds."

Eddie was taken aback, glancing away from his best friend and shifting awkwardly, "Yeah, I — uh — know that, Richie."

"Well, not everyone does." The boy scowled at the ground. "Like my stupid fucking parents. They said dumb shit, Eds, and I just—"

"Couldn't shut the fuck up?" Eddie finished.

Richie looked up at him, smirking, "You know me too well, Eddie Spaghetti."

Eddie couldn't even be bothered to scold him for the nickname, shrugging, "Comes with being friends twelve years, right?"

“Right,” Richie nodded, “Friends.”

There was something almost... bitter in Richie’s tone. No, maybe not bitter but certainly something *else*, something that felt important for Eddie to distinguish. His palms began to sweat and he swallowed, wiping them on his shorts.

He opened his mouth to try and say *anything* but nothing came.

Richie had already looked away, anyway...

“My mom called you a fairy, a sicko too, and it just—“ He huffed, forming a fist and biting his shaking knuckle. “I hated her so much right then because you’re not, Eddie! You’re not sick, you’re just *you*.”

“Really, Richie, your Mom calling me names isn’t worth you getting your ass handed to you by your Dad. I know I’m not sick. Maybe I didn’t always but I do now and you shouldn’t have...” Eddie trailed off, gesturing to his best friend’s battered face.

“The hell I shouldn’t have!” Richie jumped to his feet. “What else could I do? *Let* her talk about you like that? Like you were dirt? Like something is wrong with you?”

“I don’t know!” Eddie snapped, “Yeah, maybe, you should have just let her, Richie. Then you wouldn’t be hurt! I hate it when you’re—“

He slammed his mouth shut along with his eyes, counting to ten in his head.

Only Richie could get him this angry, this mixed up and scattered. Make him so flustered and worried that he almost said too much, said the words he wouldn’t be able to pull back. And then what would he do?

“Getting yourself hurt for me is fucking dumb.” Eddie finished, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Yeah, well, my Dad pretty clearly told me just how fucking dumb I am while he was beating the shit out of me, so...” Richie glowered. His eyes flickered to Eddie’s window. “Maybe I should just—“

“Don’t even think about it, Tozier. *You* wanted to talk — sorry, chit-chat — so you’re not leaving until we fucking *chit-chat*, asshole.” Eddie snapped, stepping forward to shove a finger into Richie’s chest, “You didn’t climb through my window to complain about your shitty parents and you didn’t come to tell me you’re bi or whatever, so stop bitching and just say what you came to say!”

“I don’t know what that is!” Richie argued, his voice strained. “Okay? I don’t know! All I know is that I didn’t fucking want to go back to *them* and you,” He paused, faltered, and then pressed on, “You’re the first person I thought about going to.”

Eddie’s arms dropped to his sides as he looked up at Richie ‘Trashmouth’ Tozier, the boy who was never serious, who was never ever genuine, and still felt his breath catch in his throat. Not in a bad way like his panic attacks or asthma either but in a completely different way.

It made his lungs burn and for the first time, Eddie welcomed the feeling.

“You’re always the first person I think about, Eds,” Richie muttered, looking off the side and shaking his head, “It’s really fucking annoying, actually. I can barely pay attention to shit half the time anyway and then there’s always *you* just fucking up my focus even more. I fucking *hate* it, Eds.”

“D-don’t call me that, you know I hate it.”

The flustered words slipped out before Eddie could stop them and he instantly hated himself for them. Here, Richie was saying about the closest he’d ever say to what Eddie really wanted to hear and Eddie was complaining about a stupid goddamn nickname, again?

“I don’t think you do,” Richie said after a minute, looking back into Eddie’s dark eyes. “Just like I don’t actually hate thinking about you all the time, like how I don’t really hate it at all.”

Eddie said nothing for a long time before slowly nodding, “Maybe.”

Then he licked his lips and forced out the words he knew he owed

Richie at this point. “I think about you all the time, too, just so you know. Worry about you, too. Way more than I probably should, considering you’re an asshole who spends most of his time practically *begging* for trouble. And I hate it, too, only I don’t really either.”

Richie stared at him and Eddie thought it was probably the longest time he’d seen the boy go without moving. Shuffling, Eddie squeezed his eyes shut again and finally uttered the words he knew he probably should have said a long time ago.

“*I like* you, Richie.” He breathed out, like if he said it too loud everything in his world would crumble and fall apart.

It was quiet for so long that Eddie was forced to peek his eyes open, only to find Richie staring at him just like before. His heart sank and he felt like falling through the floor, through the Earth, and just disappearing for the rest of his goddamn life.

“You know what? Just— just forget it. I didn’t mean—“

Suddenly split lips were crashing against his and awkward, inexperienced limps were pulling him closer and it couldn’t have felt more right because *nothing* in all of Eddie’s life could even attempt to compare to *this*.

Instinctually, his own arms came up to snake around Richie’s neck to make their ridiculous height difference a bit less imposing. Maybe Richie felt the same way, maybe he didn’t but if this moment in time was all Eddie ever got of all the things he’d never dared to want, he thought maybe he’d be okay with that. He thought maybe he could live through that.

As quickly as the kiss had begun, it was over.

However, Richie didn’t move away. He remained exactly as close to Eddie as he’d been for the short-lived lip lock, his eyes still sealed shut. His breath was warm and smelled like dime store mints and nicotine, which was exactly what he had tasted like.

Eddie swallowed hard, only then realizing just how out of breath he was. Sounding a bit strangled, he began to panic once again, “It—it’s

okay, you know if you don't feel the same way. If this was just whatever this was then that's okay.”

Richie's finally opened his eyes and gave Eddie an incredulous look, “You fucking kidding me, Eds? You're supposed to be the smart one! You think I'd make a move as fucking bold as *kissing you* if I didn't fucking like you, too?!”

Eddie shrugged, face turning pink, “I don't know! Everything's a joke to you, so I thought maybe—“

“*You're* not a joke to me,” Richie argued firmly. “*You're* not.”

Numbly, the other boy nodded, “Yeah, I know that now. I'm sorry, I just never thought you could ever *like* me the way I like you.”

“Honestly, Eds?” Richie muttered, biting his lip like he was nervous. A nervous Richie Tozier became Eddie's new favorite thing in that moment. “I think I more than like you, you know what I'm saying?”

Eddie nodded again, “Yeah, I think I more than like you, too.”

Richie smiled as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulder and he nodded enthusiastically. “Well, that's fucking great! Now, we can like make-out, like, all the time!”

“Oh my god,” Eddie muttered, shoving the other boy away, “*Why* do I even like you?”

“*More* than like me, Eds. You more than like—!”

This time it was Richie who was silenced with a kiss.

He definitely didn't hate it.

It's Friday, I'm in love.